K.T.: Since one of the ways you tend to work is in terms of pro-
jects, can you talk about them: how long a project might take you
to do, what provokes you to do a certain one?

C.G.: There's no philosophy behind changing the content of my
projects from time to time. I just notice that I work intensely
on a given subject within a certain camera format for about three
or four years. During that time, I'm very wrapped up in that
particular project and after a ~~time~~ while I have exhausted whatever it
had offered me. Then I look for something that's fairly differ-
ent. Often a different camera will serve as a springboard for
getting into a different project. It's the discipline or chal-
lenge of seeing in a slightly different size and shape of format.

K.T.: How did you become involved in the project of photographing
the six sisters?

C.G.: I think all of the projects that I've done grow out of my
everyday experience. They're autobiographical. In "Six Sisters:
An Extended Portrait," I think it was a combination of reliving
my own childhood and looking forward to what it would be like to
have a child. That was the emotional content that fired the pro-
ject. It was also a logical extension of previous work. I had
worked in Milton-Park and Centre-Sud areas in Montreal. I lived
in Milton-Park but I didn't know the people I photographed very
well. Centre-Sud wasn't even my neighbourhood. So the work was
sort of a survey of the psychology and sociology of those neigh-
bourhoods: portraits, but portraits on the level of social inter-
action rather than on an intimate level. ~~So~~ Photographing the
six sisters ~~was an extension of wanting~~ satisfied a desire. to take one ~~person~~, two,
three, or more people, and follow them over a long period of time.

K.T.: In the whole body of work, which includes single images and groups of photos, up to four,
mounted together, you have different kinds of "extended portraits".
~~The way I see it, you made extended portraits in a couple
of directions. You have both different~~ There are images of the same person
at different times, sometimes at very short intervals, ~~and you~~ And then

X ~~have~~ *there are* images of the interrelationships between two or three or four of the girls.

C.G.: In my mind different things happen in the single images as opposed to the multiple ones. In two, three, or four images to-
X gether, ~~they emphasized~~ *there was emphasis on* some sort of shift, and in a couple of
X the most successful, the shifts were psychological. ¶I would argue that portraiture is primarily a psychological record of an event, and that includes between the subject and yourself.

no new parag. Some of the other ones were more gross shifts, with the kids playing, so the differences from image to image are things like the difference between a kid walking and one swinging.

no new parag There's one that I like a lot, where the four girls are sit-ting on a bench. So there are eight legs and they shift posi-tions in each of the four images.

K.T.: Was time an important issue?

X C.G.: ~~Ya.~~ *Yes* With large format one thing that happens is a tension or contradiction between the stillness of the camera and the ac-tion of the kids. So sometimes the images are blurred: someone moves into the frame during the time of the exposure and so on. I was also aware that photographing the little girls had a sort of nostalgic, poignant aspect of stopping moments. It's a fanta-sy that you can hold onto time to relive an experience.

K.T.: Was the background or environment important?

C.G.: Not in the same way as the Milton-Park or Centre-Sud port-
X raits, where the background was as important or more *important* in terms of the informational content. In the little girls, the person was the central focus and the environment was a secondary echo or re-inforcement. I was aware of the backgrounds either in terms of

tonalities or to project a particular mood. Many are fairly dark
or middle grey or have a bit of information -- a staircase, a
brick wall.   I suppose on a sociological level, the girls'
clothes were the main environmental objects. It was a household
that didn't have books, pictures, a lot of records. So they
seemed to put the emphasis on clothing. In some ways visually
you can read ~~what there is to read~~ a lot about the family.

K.T.: The next project was the store windows.

> "THE OBJECTS WERE MODEST (IN THE FAMOUS HIERARCHICAL
> SENSE OF THE WORD): THEY WERE WAISTCOATS, IN A HABER-
> DASHER'S SMALL DISPLAY WINDOW. THIS MAN, THIS ARTISAN,
> HAD SEVENTEEN WAISTCOATS TO ARRANGE IN HIS WINDOW, WITH
> AS MANY SETS OF CUFFLINKS AND NECKTIES SURROUNDING
> THEM. HE SPENT ABOUT ELEVEN MINUTES ON EACH; WE TIMED
> HIM. WE LEFT, TIRED OUT, AFTER THE SIXTH ITEM. WE HAD
> BEEN THERE FOR ONE HOUR IN FRONT OF THAT MAN, WHO WOULD
> COME OUT TO SEE THE EFFECT AFTER HAVING ADJUSTED THESE
> THINGS ONE MILLIMETER. EACH TIME HE CAME OUT, HE WAS
> SO ABSORBED THAT HE DID NOT SEE US. WITH THE DEXTERITY
> OF A FITTER, HE ARRANGED HIS SPECTACLE, BROW WRINKLED,
> EYES FIXED, AS IF HIS WHOLE FUTURE LIFE DEPENDED ON
> IT."[1]

> WITH ADMIRATION, FERNAND LÉGER DESCRIBES THE SHOPKEEP-
> ER'S ARTISTRY, ATTENTION TO DETAIL, AND RIGOROUS DISCI-
> PLINE. WITH THE SAME OBSESSION AND ATTENTION TO DE-
> TAIL, CLARA GUTSCHE PHOTOGRAPHS THESE WORKS, TRANSFORM-
> ING THEM INTO ANIMATED ARRAYS OF THE MERCHANT'S AND
> SOCIETY'S CRAFT. CO-DIRECTED BY THE ARTISTAN AND THE

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[1] Fernand Léger, "L'esthétique de la machine: l'objet fabriqué,
l'artisan et l'artiste," Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne, Paris
1924. Reprinted in Fonctions de la peinture, Éditions Gonthiers
1965, p. 57. Translation Functions of Painting 1973, p. 56.

PHOTOGRAPHER, THE WINDOW DISPLAY BECOMES STREET THEA-
TRE. ADMISSION IS FREE. WANDERING THE STREET OR SEAT-
ED IN FRONT OF THESE PICTURES, THE AUDIENCE IS SEDUCED
BY THE PERFORMANCE. THE DIALOGUE IS SPARSE; ONLY ONE
WORD IS SPOKEN. BUY ... BUY ... BUY ...

C.G.: The photographs came out of the simple experience of taking
a walk after supper, and window-shopping after hours. I became
fascinated with the displays both in terms of design and of what
they says about our society. There's a great wealth of information
about what we're interested in, what we do, and how we do it.
They become symbolic objects, symbolizing all sorts of complex
relationships that we have between each other and to our society.

Visually it was also a beginning. You move from one dis-
crete rectangular window to the next with a dark space in between
and you begin to get a real sense of series. This experience fi-
nally translated into the final visual form of the photographs.
I photographed during the day under various light conditions, de-
pending on whether I wanted the reflections to be dominant or the
merchandise to be dominant. The images were painted with a large
dark frame around them, so that the windows float in the dark
space, which, of course, refers back to the experience of viewing
the windows at night.

FRAGMENTED FIGURES, HEADLESS BODIES, AND BODILESS
HEADS, FLYING, FLOATING, AND DANCING OBJECTS BECKON US
INTO AN ESTABLISHED SPACE. A SPACE DEFINED BY RAKING
SUNLIGHT SPOTLIGHTING CENTRAL CHARACTERS OR VEILED
LIGHT EVENLY COVERING A MOTLEY CHORUS LINE OF CUPS, EN-
CLOSED BY A BLACK BORDER WHICH FUNCTIONS AS THE SIDE OF
A BUILDING, OR AS A FRAGMENT OF A DARKENED THEATRE.
MYSTERIOUS, MAGICAL, MENACING SPACE.

C.G.: When the light is very overcast you get a fairly somber ef-
fect with a lot of reflections; so there is a complex interleaving

and interweaving of the surface reflections -- clouds, buildings,
the other side of the street -- and the merchandise. If it is
medium overcast, hazy sun, or bright overcast with a few clouds,
you often get an intermediary effect with the reflections playing
an important role, but equal to or perhaps a bit less than the
merchandise itself. Bright sun minimizes the shadows to the
point of completely eliminating them, sometimes eliminating re-
flections from the glass itself, so that what you see is primari-
ly the merchandise in the window and, of course, a Visa or Mas-
ter-Charge card stuck onto the surface of the glass. Bright sun
acts as a spotlight and creates the razor-blade shadows, sharp
angular shadows which give an edge to the photographs. Sometimes
A sense of violence. Part of the overall emotional and intellec-
tual content of the photographs was both an attraction to consum-
er items, to the whole consumer society, and a repulsion to that
society and to the excess of times.

MAGICAL, MENACING SPACE,
AND COMMERCIAL SPACE. OUR CREDIT CARDS WON'T BE CUT UP
   TODAY. BUT THE OVERPRODUCTION OF GOODS AND SEDUCTION
   OF CONSUMERS STILL MANAGE TO ELICIT A REACTION. WE OB-
   JECT TO THE SALES PUSH, THE INDOCTRINATION DUPING US
   INTO BUYING MORE AND MORE. WITH RAZOR-LIKE SHADOWS
   SLICING THE PICTURE, DECAPITATED BODIES, AND MACABRE
   SCENES OF HEADS PILED UP IN A CORNER, THE PHOTOGRAPHER
   HAS FORCED THE ISSUE. THE FANTASY WORLD OF PLAYFUL
   JUXTAPOSITIONS IS INTERRUPTED BY THE RECOGNITION OF
   REAL LIFE ISSUES. OUR RESPONSES ARE ACUTE BUT CONTRA-
   DICTORY.

C.G.: The mannequins symbolize people, and one thing I was react-
ing to and identifying with was a certain violence that is done
to women. Just the way the mannequins are displayed often symbo-
lizes how people see women in society. People argue that they're
just mannequins, but I think that how they're placed, who places
them, and why they do it is important to analyze.

There is a sense of violence and a criticism of that vio-
lence on my part; but there's also a real sense of humour. I was
laughing at a lot of the things that I found in the windows. and
In some, of the windows the juxtaposition of objects is simply
ridiculous. On a serious level it might symbolize alienation and
fragmentation, but on a non-serious level it's absurd, and some-
times touching.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE ARE UNEXPECTEDLY JUXTAPOSED, THE
COUPLING OF FERNS AND GIRDLES, PAMPERS AND PASTRIES,
10-SPEED BIKES AND NEON LIGHTS, STUNS AN ORDERLY MIND.
CIRRUS CLOUDS HANG ABOVE RELIGIOUS PICTURES AND STUFFED
OWLS; A GIGANTIC ULTRA BAN DWARFS A CITY STREET: RIDI-
CULOUS SCENES WHICH MAKE US LAUGH OUTRIGHT AND SIT BACK
IN AMAZEMENT. OR SCENES WHICH HAVE EDGES, FORCING MUF-
FLED LAUGHTER WHICH BETRAYS UNEASINESS.

K.T.: Next project, the park. A series called "Reconstructed
Constructions."

C.G.: I started using an 8 x 10 camera as a way of challenging
myself and breaking out of old habits, finding different situa-
tions and designs. I spent a year doing murals and flat wall
spaces in Montreal, and at the end of the summer I started work-
ing with park spaces and playgrounds. It partly grows out of
having a small child and spending a huge amount of time in the
park. I like to photograph things that are families; the pro-
jects all seem to come after I live a particular experience and
then the photograph functions as a record or extension of that
experience.

K.T.: Did you try to do a systematic investigation of how parks
are used, what happens in them?

C.G.: No. My work usually functions on some level that is not
conducive to doing systematic analysis. The emotional content is

looser and I like to let that roll in a way that you can't if you set out an almost scientific analysis and comparison of different situations. I'm looking for more subtle changes. I've really zeroed into one park, photographing from all different perspectives. There are sometimes references from one photograph to another; the same objects will keep reappearing in different parts of different photographs.

I like the structures in playgrounds and I enjoy having people entering my photos. Even though they're very small details, they symbolize, to me, "people activity" in the park. Hopefully, the viewer will identify with the people and will experience the photographs through the perspective of seeing somebody in them.

I also like minimalist photographs to a great extent, so that's why some of them have a great stretch of empty foreground and a great stretch of empty white sky and all the details stretch from left to right in the centre. They're horizontal photographs along the horizon line.